

METROPOLITANISTAN

TAQDIRUL ISLAM

Spare me the pity,
 Spare me your cries,
 Welcome to my city,
 Where hope dies.

Hear that sound? That silent rumble?
 Under the asphalt – that distant shriek?
 Don't feel safe, keep your feet nimble,
 For the pipes are old, and they often leak.

Our days are long, and nights are longer,
 Our safety is up on that silent tree.
 "To live as scum, and die from hunger"—
 That's our city's motto, you see.

PHOTO: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD



ILLUSTRATION: RIDWAN NOOR NAFIS

Another day, another online class

RASHA JAMEEL

I'd been looking forward to attending my first online class ever since they were announced.

Of course, there was an element of surprise there since I'd never attended one before. My overly-curious self was already pestering other faculties on details of how the classes would be conducted. Some answers gave me hope of witnessing fun and interactive sessions, while others, well, weren't as hope-inducing.

"It'll be like a video call session," one of my teachers informed me.

Nearly gagged on my afternoon Milo as I read that mail.

A video call session. Video call. Videos captured in real time. Cameras. Exposure of facial features. ABSOLUTELY NOT.

The introvert in me was in absolute turmoil. Imagine a fish out of the water. That bad. My face was not going live while I was lounging around in my house, clad in Nutella-stained pyjamas. This was an invasion of privacy.

I mailed my teacher back with, "How about an audio call session instead?"

Teacher responded with, "Of course, that also works. It's your attendance that counts."

That reassured me for the time being. This wasn't an invasion of privacy after all. We had a say in the matter and that's all I could've asked for. I turned a deaf ear to all my friends and classmates insisting otherwise.

I decided to pay attention to that one teacher only.

I'll be fine. It's going to be a smooth online class session.

It was finally "the day of". We'd all received texts the night before, from the university's registrar, notifying us of the online classes to be held in the coming weeks. I wasn't all that stressed, quite the opposite actually. I was prepared to multitask by simultaneously scrolling through my Instagram feed,

watching Niveditha Prakasam's stand-up comedy routine on Netflix, and listening to my teacher deliver her PowerPoint presentation on the "energy transduction of cells" in the background of it all. It was going to be a splendid online class.

By the time the clock at the top-right corner of my laptop read 11:15 AM, I was all set with my headphones, my malfunctioning phone with a slightly-cracked display, my fluffy monkey-shaped pillows from when I was 10, and my healthy breakfast of leftover spicy instant ramen. I felt like a pro at life and rightfully so. I was being a proper adult, right?

When it was 11:20, I headed to my MIC207 Google class, in search for a link to the Google Meet page where my online class was to be conducted. Upon discovering the link, I clicked on it and was then redirected to the aforementioned Google Meet page.

"Allow google.com to access your microphone and camera?" a message popped up on my laptop screen.

Absolutely not.

I hit the "Do not allow" button and proceeded to join my online class. Took a while for the audio and video of my teacher to properly be in sync. Then it was time for the attendance to be taken.

I heard my name being called.

Dang.

I scrambled to answer. My computer screen froze and the chat box stopped working. Frustrated and anxious, I banged the touchpad of my laptop with the back of my fist, while my thumb was still on the semi-broken display of my phone.

For the first time in my life, I had managed to simultaneously carry out three tasks in quick succession.

I had turned on both my laptop's microphone and webcam, and had double tapped on an Instagram post from 2018, of a boy I really liked.

Rasha Jameel is an overzealous Ravenclaw who often draws inspiration from mundane things such as memes. Send her your memespierational thoughts at rasha.jameel@outlook.com